

## Where I'm From

I'm from hand-me-down clothes and shared bedrooms;  
weathered barns, once home to hung tobacco, now adorned with oversized quilt blocks;  
Easter baskets and Christmas stockings stuffed the night before by mothers of adult children;  
tenderloin and half-chicken sandwiches that put the more-famed western Kentucky barbeque to shame.

I'm from "back in the holler" and "out on the ridge," "Marrowbone" and "Turkey Neck Bend";  
grandparents who are the closest neighbor and sausage and biscuit breakfasts;  
summers spent skipping rocks and twirling in flower girl dresses to MJ's *Thriller* album;  
supper tables with no empty chairs and bowls of pinto beans too cornbread-filled to earn the moniker "soup beans."

I'm from back roads and "I got stuck behind a tractor" tardy explanations;  
favorite pets heart-wrenchingly buried in favorite spots in the yard;  
14,000 churches, straight-ticket Republican voting, and gut instinct aversion to change;  
"good ol' boy" politics carried out by men you can't help but like.

I'm from gardens and mason-jar lined December pantries;  
great-grandmothers' canners and cookbooks stained with cake batter and coffee;  
potlucks preceded by giggle-worthy prayers fumbled from the mouths of reluctant spokeswomen;  
funny, nonreligious, eulogies by the preachers my cancer-stricken, but unfailingly accepting, dad hand-picked.

I'm from pajama-clad 6:00 am dog walks;  
repeated, though slightly modified, "How many city maintenance workers does it take to eat a biscuit?" jokes;  
obligatory waves from business owners privy to my ill-fitting outfits and pet menagerie nearly every morning;  
occasional, but always muffled, nonsense from guys whose inexplicably loud trucks are likely the only thing oversized.

I'm from a downtown art studio nestled between Symantha's Beauty Shop and one of two chain restaurants;  
abstract murals and whimsical ceramic fish that greet bikers and hoarders heading to Newby's motorcycle garage;  
loafers who sit around the 1940s-era courthouse and far-too-old-to-be-doing-it cruisers who decided to park;  
the high school and bait shop, separated by two miles of Main Street, that still mark town boundaries.

I'm from the intersection of frustration and can't imagine otherwise;  
the urge to run and simultaneous pull to plant roots that seem inevitable;  
a home of books and pictures that remind me of my other lives, of escape;  
a sense of self and understanding of my father that keep me bound.

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